

§ 520.3 Policy.

(a) It is ARS policy to comply with the provisions of NEPA and related laws and policies.

(b) Environmental documents should be concise, written in plain language, and address the issues pertinent to the decision being made.

(c) Environmental documents may be substituted or combined with other reports which serve to facilitate decisionmaking.

(d) Costs of analyses and environmental documents are to be planned for during the budgetary process for the plan, program, or project. Special provisions for financing NEPA process activities which are unanticipated and extraordinary may be made in the Office of the Administrator of ARS.

(e) ARS personnel will cooperate with other agencies, States, contractors, or other entities proposing to undertake activities involving the ARS to assure that NEPA considerations are addressed early in the planning process to avoid delays and conflicts as required by 40 CFR 1501.2.

(f) For some activities, project participants outside ARS may be required to provide data and documentation. When an applicant or contractor prepares an environmental assessment (EA) or a contractor prepares an environmental impact statement (EIS), the activities shall be carried out according to 40 CFR 1506.5.

(g) Environmental documents, decision notices, and records of decision must be made available for review by the public. There shall be an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in the environmental analysis process (40 CFR 1501.7).

(h) The concepts of tiering to eliminate repetitive discussions applicable to EIS's (40 CFR Part 1502) are also applicable to EA's.

(i) ARS personnel may adopt an existing EA or EIS when a proposed action is substantially the same as the action for which the existing EA or EIS was prepared (40 CFR 1506.3 (b)).

(j) ARS personnel may incorporate by reference any existing documents in order to reduce the bulk of an EA or EIS (40 CFR 1502.21).

(k) After prior consultation with the Council on Environmental Quality, ARS personnel may forego preparation of an EA or EIS in emergency situations (40 CFR 1506.11).

§ 520.4 Responsibilities.

(a) *Administrator.* The Administrator is responsible for environmental analysis and documentation required for compliance with the provisions of NEPA and related laws, policies, plans, programs, and projects. The ARS Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Interactions has been delegated responsibility for the establishment of procedures and coordination necessary to carry out the policies and provisions of NEPA.

(b) *Deputy Administrators and Area Directors.* The Deputy Administrators and Area Directors are responsible to the Administrator for assuring that ARS programs are in compliance with the policies and procedures of NEPA.

§ 520.5 Categorical exclusions.

For the following categories of actions, the preparation of an EA or EIS is not required:

(a) *Department of Agriculture categorical exclusions (7 CFR 1b.3).*

(1) Policy development, planning and implementation which are related to routine activities such as personnel, organizational changes or similar administrative functions;

(2) Activities which deal solely with the functions of programs, such as program budget proposals, disbursement, transfer or reprogramming of funds;

(3) Inventories, research activities and studies, such as resource inventories and routine data collection when such actions are clearly limited in context and intensity;

(4) Educational and information programs and activities;

(5) Activities which are advisory and consultative to other agencies, public and private entities, and

(6) Activities related to trade representation and market development activities overseas.

(b) *ARS categorical exclusions.* ARS actions which, based on previous experience, have been found to have limited scope and intensity and produce little or no individual or cumulative impacts